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Willingness to Accept Forgiveness in Various Religious Targets

A thesis
presented to
the faculty of the Department of Psychology
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in Psychology

by
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August 2004

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Keywords: Religious Affiliation, Halo Effect, Boomerang Effect,

Halo Recovery Effect

ABSTRACT

Willingness to Accept Forgiveness in Various Religious Targets

by

Meridith A. Brewer

Three scenarios regarding a target man's moral behavior were used to examine 'religious halo,' 'religious boomerang', and a 'halo recovery' effect. Initially, participants rated a male target in response to his religious affiliation. Secondly, participants rated the male target following an act of infidelity. Finally, participants provided ratings of the male target with the knowledge that the target received forgiveness from significant others. Results indicated that participants did not discriminate based on knowledge of the target's religious affiliation but did reject the target following an act of infidelity. New to this research, however, was discovery of a 'halo recovery' where participants were again accepting of a target following forgiveness from his wife and church leaders. These results varied from previous findings that suggested that participants' religious affiliation primarily influenced judgments of moral behavior.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my new husband, Dustin W. Brewer, for his unconditional support while I have been in school. You will never know how much it means to me that you have stood by me through all of this. I would also like to thank Dr. Roger C. Bailey for all of the help and patience he has given me over the past two years. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with him and learning how to be more patient with myself.

I must mention Robin Leonard who also showed a lot of patience when I needed help with my data analysis. She was always willing to listen and problem-solve with me as we were trying to find the correct syntax to run for my research design.

Last, but not least, I have to thank Dr. Bozena Zdaniuk, University of Pittsburgh, the University Center for Social and Urban Research who provided me with an example of a gim syntax that tested a mixed repeated measures design. Without his help, I may still be searching for answers.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge of someone's religious involvement or affiliation can affect opinions about him/her. It is important to understand religious stereotypes and to see what other attributes or behaviors could influence one's opinion of a religious person. The current study will examine college student evaluations of a target man who is either religiously affiliated (i.e., Muslim or Christian) or nonreligious and who is described as having had a sexual affair and who later confesses his infidelity and received forgiveness from his wife and religious leaders. It is believed that personal characteristics of the target, such as his trustworthiness and desirability as a friend, will be impacted by various other types of characteristics and behaviors, like religious affiliation and sexual behavior.

This research project will attempt to support and expand on past theories and research to gain a better understanding of possible religious stereotypes and their impact on interpersonal perceptions. The hypotheses formulated for this project were guided by Bailey and Garrou (1983); Bailey and Young (1986) on the religious "halo" and religious "boomerang" phenomenon. It is anticipated that college participants in northeastern Tennessee will hold positive views of religiously affiliated individuals (i.e., halo effect) but they will penalize them more severely than the nonreligious target following knowledge of an immoral act (i.e., boomerang effect). The present research will study the influence of knowledge of a religious person's personal confession of infidelity and forgiveness received from his wife and religious leaders on ratings of trust worthiness and desirability as a friend. The forgiveness addition to the halo/boomerang sequence will help expand on understanding of the role of subtle beliefs operating in social perceptions of religiosity.

How do People Form Impressions of Others?

We form impressions initially and later of people. Early impressions are formed on the basis of limited information, while later impressions are formed on the basis of more expanded information. This

research is of a “social perception” type that studies how people form initial judgments based on limited information.

Implicit Personality Theory

Implicit personality theories consist of our ideas about what kinds of personality traits go together. Aronson, Wilson, and Akert (2004, p. 107) explained, “When people are unsure about the nature of the social world, they use their schemas to fill in the gaps.” This implicit personality theory suggests that people use shortcuts to gain more information about a person than what is given. These shortcuts allow people the convenience of a quick assessment of another’s overall personality without having to take the time to actually get to know him/her. For example, a central trait, such as physical attractiveness, can produce a complete personality description through this process. This effect is called the physical attractiveness “halo” stereotype (Dion, Bershied, & Walster, 1972), and it reveals that knowing that a person is physically attractive allows people to assume he or she possesses other socially desirable personality traits and he or she should be more successful than less attractive people.

Another central trait that can produce a “halo” effect is religious affiliation, found by Bailey and Garrou (1983); Bailey and Young (1986). If people know another person is religious, they will usually assign additional positive traits to the person, such as being more intelligent, more physically attractive, better adjusted, more trustworthy, as well as hold a positive opinion of the religious person as a prospective friend or working partner. The religious “halo” effect is a powerful social phenomenon and has been shown to impact a number of areas of social life (Bailey & Garrou, 1983; Bailey & Young, 1986).

Why are the Religious Perceived Favorably?

Religions throughout the world teach personal morality and personal accountability for violation of moral standards. Therefore, a religious person can be assumed to be a good person given no additional information about the person. A description of a religious man is presented in the current study, implicit personality theory suggests that the target will initially be evaluated positively.

Guided by theoretical considerations of Bailey and associates, it is expected that the perception of persons who are religious will be higher than persons who are not religious. The expectations of personal traits of the religious include “elevated ratings on intelligence, trustworthiness, and moral character, as well as their opinion of her as a prospective friend, working partner, or campus office holder (Bailey & Garrou, 1983, p. 693)”; social penalties, however, may occur for people who are religious but do not fulfill those high expectations.

Explaining the “Why” of Behavior

Attribution Approach

Myers (2002, p. 81) defined attribution theory as “the theory of how people explain others’ behavior.” Dispositional causes of behavior are internal causes believed to be due to another’s personality; for example, having a cruel personality. Situational causes of behavior are external causes believed to be due to something separate from the person, i.e., an environmental influence.

Aronson, Wilson, and Akert (2004) reviewed literature on the Fundamental Attribution Error and found that people tend to overestimate internal (dispositional) causes of behavior and underestimate external (situational) causes of behavior of others. Individuals view their own behavior more as caused externally, particularly following a failure outcome. This bias is due to the inaccuracy of our attributions. The fundamental attribution error occurs because when we observe others, they are the focus point; so, the person’s environment is basically ignored.

Additionally, Actor-Observer differences occur when observing another’s behavior. This difference is a matter of perception because most of the attention is focused on another person. When dealing with one’s own behavior, the attention is outward, to the surrounding situation rather than on the self (Myers, 2002). In this thesis research, university students will receive information regarding the behavior of a hypothetical male target. Attribution theory and the actor-observer difference may help explain the basis for the perceptions of the participants of the person described. Students will be told that the man cheated on his

wife. It is anticipated that this behavior will be viewed negatively. If so, participants will evaluate the man more negatively because the attribution theory predicts that participants will be more likely to explain unfavorable behavior by assigning it to internal causation, such as the person's motives.

Myers (2002) describes "correspondence inference theory" as "seeing behavior as corresponding to an inner disposition (p. 91)." Jones and Davis (1965) identified five factors that may be considered when making inferences about one's behavior: "(1) whether the behavior is seen as voluntary/freely chosen, (2) if there are any noncommon [or unexpected] effects, (3) whether the behavior is socially desirable, (4) whether the behavior impacts the person who is inferring, and (5) whether the behavior is of personal interest to the person who is inferring (p. 222-240)." It will be recalled, if another's behavior is viewed as a result of a disposition, people view that behavior as having internal causes. When an observed behavior is socially undesirable (i.e., infidelity), it is not only viewed as being due to an internal cause but also viewed as behavior for which the target person is personally responsible.

The "Religious Boomerang" effect describes an outcome in which a more negative evaluation follows knowledge of a socially undesirable behavior (Bailey & Young, 1986). If participants view the target's sexual affair as personally motivated and evaluate the actual behavior as socially undesirable, an internal attribution might be made as the cause of the behavior. Evaluation of another's behavior can be affected by people's need to form a personality description of them in a short amount of time. Having similar personality qualities as the person along important dimensions may influence such evaluations (LaFreniere, 1996).

Unjustified Evaluations of Others

Prejudice

Myers (2001) described prejudice as an attitude (usually negative) toward a distinct social group and its members. Attitudes often function as schemas, which are cognitive frameworks for organizing, interpreting, and recalling information. People who are prejudiced toward a group process information about

that group differently than about a group toward which they are not prejudiced. Prejudice usually grows stronger over time because information consistent with the prejudiced views tends to receive selective attention, is cognitively rehearsed more frequently, and recalled more easily.

Paulus (1998) says prejudice can stem from our tendency to divide our world into “us” and “them”; viewing others as belonging to an outgroup and “us” as belonging to an ingroup. This often leads to ingroup cohesion and to hostility toward the outgroup. Prejudice often stems from socially adopted stereotypes.

Stereotyping

Aronson et al. (2004) report that stereotypes allow us to process information about a particular person based on the group that they belong to and they influence what aspects of a person we remember. Those characteristics that are consistent with the stereotype are remembered more readily. Thus, the stereotype is supported by an illusory correlation between the stereotype and real experiences with members of the group who are targeted by the prejudice. This is due to the selective attention for those qualities confirming one’s attitudes about the group he/she has stereotypes toward. An illusory correlation is “the tendency to see relationships, or correlations, between events that are actually unrelated (pp. 476-477)”; but, will negative behavior be viewed more saliently in people of different religious background? If participants in the present study rate both the Baptist and Muslim target man positively, a positive religious stereotype will be operating. However, if participants rate the Muslim and Nonreligious target man more negatively than the Baptist target, prejudice may be operating.

Stereotypes Based on Religiosity

Khallque (1982) demonstrated participants sometimes evaluated their own religion more positively than other religions. But might a religious person rate a person from another religion more favorably than a person who is nonreligious? In the present study, it is expected that the Christian and Muslim believers will be rated more positively than the nonreligious target, particularly if a religious halo accompanies religious involvement (Bailey & Garrou, 1983). A person who is similar in religious affiliation to the majority of

students, say Protestant, will receive more positive ratings than a person affiliated with another religion or a nonreligious target. However, if prejudice is operating in these participants, then they will rate the Muslim target as more negative than the Protestant but more positive than the nonreligious target.

In the Khallque study, a sample of 70 high caste Muslim school students from the Urban schools of Ranchi town and the Rural school of Chitarpur were studied. Ages ranged from 9-10 years and 15-16 years. Each participant completed a (a) the Religious Prejudice scale (RPS), which measures the degree of prejudice on a 20-item (3-point Likert-type) scale. One on the scale represents “Strongly Agree” and three represents “Agree,”(b) the Religious Image scale (RIS) which indicates the degree to which participants attribute 10 moral qualities to a Hindu, Islamic, and Christian target. One on the scale represents not possessing a moral quality, two represents partially possessing a certain moral quality, and partially possessing the absence of moral quality, and (c) the Religious and the Caste Stereotype scale (RCS), which measures stereotyping for the Hindu, Muslim, and Christian religions and castes (high, intermediary, and low). This instrument includes a check-list of 30 adjectives.

Participants were divided into two groups of high religious prejudice and low religious prejudice based on the results from the RSC and only those who could be classified were analyzed on the RIS and the RCS. Groups were then divided into: urban/high religious prejudice, urban/low religious prejudice, rural/high religious prejudice, and rural/low religious prejudice.

Khallque found that Muslims who have high prejudice tend also to have more negative stereotypes toward Hindus and Christians. The present study will investigate the theory of religious similarity in interpersonal attraction, which states the more similar people are to you, the more likely you will view them as belonging to your own group, and the more you will like them (Aronson et al., 2004). Therefore, it would be expected that participants in the current study, the majority of whom are Protestant, will have more favorable evaluations of the Christian person than either the Muslim or nonreligious persons.

Prejudice Based on Gender

Evidence of a gender prejudice was found by Kanekar, Koswalla, and Nazareth (1988). In their study, both men and women participants evaluated the male target higher than the female target “with the difference scores being larger in favor of male occupants for higher-ranked occupations than for lower-ranked occupations” (p. 685). The experimenter in the current study included a male target for both men and women participants to evaluate because past research suggests a female prejudice toward male persons; it may be possible to obtain overall higher ratings when using a male target compared to including a female target alone, or both a male and female target.

Bailey and Garrou (1983) had participants evaluate an opposite-sex target (i.e., male participants evaluate a female target and female participants evaluate a male target). Bailey and Young (1986) used both men and women participants to evaluate a female target. The current study will use a male target evaluated by both men and women participants. There is some evidence (Kanekar, Koswalla, & Nasareth, 1988) that male targets receive a more positive evaluation by men and women participants than a similar female target. By adding gender of participants in this study, additional understanding may be derived about religious prejudice.

Prejudice includes the attributes people assign to others based on their group membership. One study “found female subjects subscribing as much as...male subjects to the prejudices about males and females in the achievement domain (Kanekar et al, 1988). They chose a sample of 250 men and 250 women from the University of Bombay and the Indian Institute of Technology. Each participant rated the respectability of male and female target occupants in 16 occupations: scientist, surgeon, physician, professor, writer, engineer, lawyer, journalist, school teacher, librarian, politician, laborer, clerk, domestic servant, peon, and prostitute. Ratings were obtained using a 17-point rating scale labeled at 3 points: one represented very low respectability, four represented average respectability, and seven represented very high respectability.

Male target occupants of high and moderate status jobs received a higher overall respectability rating than female target occupants by both men and women participants. Results indicated that both men and women show a positive bias toward men; if a man and woman have the same occupation, the man is regarded as having higher status than the woman.

Features of the Present Research

The present research assesses how college men and women students evaluate a male target following knowledge of his religious affiliation. Thereafter, he will again be evaluated following knowledge of his sexual infidelity and of his forgiveness.

Acceptance of a Religious Person

As mentioned earlier, the halo effect is related to Implicit Personality Theory. Only the knowledge of a specific trait of another, people tended to attribute a more positive overall personality description of that person (Aronson et al., 2004). Some characteristics seem amenable to a halo effect, i.e., certain personal traits that lead to more favorable perceptions of a person. For example, the acceptance of a person based on their religious affiliation.

Rejection of an Immoral Religious Person

Attribution theory states that people tend to overestimate the dispositional (internal) causes of other's behavior (Myers, 2002). In the current study, the target man is either Christian, Muslim, or Nonreligious (Religious Affiliation scenario) and is having a sexual affair (Infidelity scenario).

The Actor-Observer difference refers to the difference in focus when you are the actor compared to when you are the observer. As an 'actor', a person's attention tends to focus on the surrounding environment as causing his/her own behavior instead of taking responsibility for it. However, an observer tends to focus more on the 'actor' than on their surrounding environment.

According to the correspondent inference theory, people believe other's behavior corresponds to inner qualities or personality traits. If the target's infidelity is viewed as freely chosen, as affecting his

wife's happiness, as socially undesirable, as something participants have personal experience(s) with and is of personal interest to the participants, such behavior would be expected to be evaluated negatively. It is assumed that participants will evaluate the religious target man negatively based on the criteria listed above. A positive evaluation that becomes more negative for religious persons than nonreligious persons due to infidelity would be evidence for a religious boomerang effect.

Forgiveness of a Fallen Religious Person

An opinion poll in 1998 revealed that many Americans (59% to 67%) were accepting of Hillary Clinton's forgiveness of her husband's infidelity as reflected by maintaining their positive views following her public statement (NewsHour, 1998). It seems that the American people are generally a very forgiving people. But following the 9-11 tragedy one might wonder if forgiveness will be extended to individuals associated with the known religious affiliation (i.e. Islam) of the 9-11 terrorists. Thus, it was decided to include a Muslim target in the present study.

Afifi, Falato, and Weiner (2001) chose a sample of 115 undergraduate students from a large northeastern university to study romantic betrayal. Participants had indicated membership in one of three categories; they had been involved in a romantic relationship in which (a) the partner discovered that the participant cheated, (b) the participant discovered that the partner cheated, or (b) that neither cheated. Participants who fell into the first two categories were investigated further to determine "actual" infidelity discovery experiences. Discovery experiences, in their study, refers to how the participant found out their partner was cheating or how their partner found out they were cheating.

Participants were asked to select the method of discovery that occurred in the relevant relationship.

The 10 methods of discovery were:

- 1) Someone else told you directly about the indiscretion
- 2) The third party involved in the indiscretion told you about the indiscretion
- 3) You overheard others discussing the indiscretion
- 4) Someone else hinted about the indiscretion
- 5) Your partner told you directly
- 6) Your partner implied that s/he may not have been faithful

- 7) Your partner told you directly after you asked
- 8) You suspected and obtained information confirming the indiscretion and told your partner directly about it
- 9) You suspected and obtained information confirming the indiscretion and hinted to your partner that you were aware of the indiscretion
- 10) You caught your partner in the act

Methods were then placed into four categories by the experimenters; unsolicited third party discovery included the first four methods, unsolicited partner discovery included the fifth and sixth methods, solicited discovery included the seventh, eighth, and ninth methods, and ‘red-handed’ discovery included the tenth method.

Several measures were additionally completed by the participants. These measures were relational outcome, partner forgiveness, and relationship quality change. Relational outcome was measured if the participant was currently dating the relevant partner and if the infidelity was the cause for those who were no longer dating the relevant partner. Forgiveness was measured using a 7-point Likert scale asking either if the participant was able to forgive their partner or if they perceived that their partner was able to forgive them. Quality change was assessed using a 6-item, 7-point scale; items included change in closeness, amount of time spent together, happiness, attraction, trust, and commitment after the indiscretion. Negative three represented that the event significantly decreased the relationship quality and positive three represented that the event significantly improved the relationship quality. Analysis revealed a linear trend between discovery method (unsolicited third-party, “red handed”, solicited, or unsolicited partner) and forgiveness. A trend like the one found by Dion, Bershied, and Walster (1972) demonstrated that unsolicited partner was the most forgivable and unsolicited third-party discovery was the least forgivable.

Unsolicited third-party discovery had the least frequency of forgiveness, followed by “red handed”, solicited, and unsolicited partner. Unsolicited partner was the most forgivable type of discovery. Although this study looked at the actual personal infidelity discovery experiences of participants, it is possible that such results could be obtained from participants through hypothetical situations.

The present research will investigate “third-party” forgiveness, that is, a person who is informed of another’s experience of discovery and the effect it had on their forgiveness. The present investigator, assuming a “Religious Halo Recovery” effect might occur as a result, and is expected that participant (third-party) opinions/attitudes of the target person to be more positive after a third-party forgiveness. It is assumed that the “Religious Halo Recovery” effect will develop following the development of the religious boomerang effect. The target person will receive forgiveness from his wife and religion.

Afifi, Falato, and Weiner’s (2002) study also suggests that, in the actual situation, unsolicited partner discovery is the most forgivable discovery method for infidelity. The third level of behavior (Redemption condition) describes the target confessing his infidelity and being forgiven by his wife and religious leaders. Participants will act as “third-party” evaluators following the target man’s wife experiencing unsolicited partner discovery (i.e. the target man told her directly about the infidelity). The current study will investigate if similar results can be found when the participant experiences, as an outsider, the discovery and forgiveness of the target man’s infidelity.

Cues from the Physical Attractiveness Stereotype

Physical Attractiveness Halo Effect

Dion, Berschied, and Walster (1972) chose a sample of 30 men and 30 women from the student body of the University of Minnesota. Each participant received three envelopes containing a picture of a target person; one envelope contained a physically attractive stimulus, another contained a stimulus of average attractiveness, and the third envelope contained an unattractive stimulus person.

Participants rated each stimulus person separately on 27 different personality traits using a 6-point scale with polar opposites. Participants were then asked to assess all stimulus persons on five additional personality traits using a 3-point scale. One represented the persons as possessing the least of a trait and three represented the persons as possessing most of a trait. Additionally, participants estimated which of the stimulus persons would be most likely (3), and which least likely (1) to engage in 30 different occupations

of low to high status. “Three status levels of 10 different general occupations were represented. Three examples follow: “Army Sergeant (low-status), Army Captain (average status), and Army Colonel (High-status) (Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, 1972, p. 28).”

Results indicate physically attractive persons are socially desirable personalities and that their lives will be happier and more successful than those of less attractiveness. These findings led researchers to conclude that there is a “What is beautiful is good” stereotype operating in our society.

Physical Attractiveness Boomerang Effect

Sigall and Ostrove (1975) chose a sample of 60 men and 60 women undergraduates. Each participant received a booklet with a description of either a physically attractive target defendant, an unattractive target defendant, or no information concerning the target defendant’s appearance. Half of the participants received an account of an attractiveness-unrelated crime (a crime in which one’s attractiveness is not used, burglary) and the rest of the participants received an account of an attractiveness-related crime (a crime in which one’s attractiveness is used, swindle). Participants were asked to sentence the target defendant to a number of years by circling a number between 1 and 15. Then they were asked to recall who the target defendant was and the seriousness of the crime on a 9-point adjective scale with polar opposites.

The unattractive target defendant was treated more harshly (i.e., given more years in prison) for an attractiveness-unrelated (burglary) crime than the attractive target defendant. This was taken to support the “what is beautiful is good” phenomena (Dion et al., 1972). However, they also found that the attractive target defendant was treated more harshly for an attractiveness-related (swindle) crime. These findings were taken to suggest that a physically attractive person who commits an attractiveness-related crime will be judged more harshly than an unattractive person. Apparently, participants believed attractiveness was a necessary condition for executing the crime.

Johnson (1984) found a “boomerang” effect also for religion. Mock jurors gave more severe sentences to a target defendant who used his religion as a defense in an assault trial than to a target defendant who did not use such a defense.

Halo and Boomerang Applied to Religion

Religious Halo Effect

Following the existence of the halo and boomerang phenomena associated with physical attractiveness, Bailey and associates sought to determine if similar outcomes might be associated with religious involvement. Bailey and Garrou (1983) selected a sample of 60 men and 120 women from a southeastern American university. Participants were mostly 18-19 year-old freshmen. Each participant viewed an opposite-sex target person’s picture then read a brief description of the target. One manipulation of the description was religious involvement (religious or nonreligious). Participants were studied in small groups. They viewed the opposite-sex target for 15-minutes. Participants then read some background information about the target. The only variance (difference) was the target’s dating availability (“highly available”, “moderately available”, or “generally unavailable”) and religious involvement (religious or nonreligious). Participants then viewed the same slide while they rated the target’s intelligence, physical attractiveness, overall adjustment, selfishness, arrogance, trustworthiness, and attractiveness as a friend or date.

Religious targets were rated as more intelligent, more physically attractive, better adjusted, less selfish, more trustworthy, and more attractive as a prospective date or friend compared to the nonreligious targets. These findings lead the investigators to introduce a new “halo” effect called the “who is religious is good” stereotype. A number of later studies confirmed the existence of a religious halo effect operating in university students.

Both the physical attractiveness and religious stereotyping can be explained by the Implicit Personality Theory. The positive evaluations of religious persons may be attributed to a more stringent

behavior expectancy. If religious persons are regarded as more socially desirable, how are such persons evaluated if their behavior is viewed as contrary to such a behavior expectancy? Based on the Halo effect, researchers examined further the effect on evaluations of religious persons whose behavior violates the general expectations of the “who is religious is good” stereotype.

Religious Boomerang Effect

Bailey and Young (1986) wondered if a boomerang effect could occur for a religious person similar to that found for a physically attractive person. A sample of 180 college students was used. Each participant was shown a slide of a female target. The target was described as either actively religious, nonreligious, or antireligious. Participants rated the target on nine 7-point rating scale, one represented the least favorable rating and seven represented the most favorable rating. Then participants read a nonhelping scenario in which that target failed to help a needy person. The needy person was described as a former high school classmate who needed money to buy an expensive formula for a child. The target made an excuse for not helping her friend. Later participants rated the target on the same nine rating scales.

At pretest, the religious woman was rated more favorably on “personal traits of intelligence, trustworthiness, and moral character, as well as their opinion of her as a prospective friend, working partner, or campus office holder” than the nonreligious or antireligious targets. This provided more support for the “who is religious is good” stereotype identified by Bailey & Garrou (1983).

However, similar to the “boomerang” effect for physical attractiveness, studied by Sigall and Ostrove (1975), following noncharitable behavior, the religious target “was perceived as less attractive as a friend, work partner, or campus office holder than the nonreligious or antireligious targets. These results provided further support for a “boomerang” effect for religion. Bailey and Young (1986) suggested that the “boomerang” effect may be caused by the initial “heightened social expectations of religious involvement” which makes a religious person more disappointing.

The Religious Halo Recovery Effect

Operational Definitions

Forgiveness and infidelity have been investigated in persons who have actually experienced infidelity in their relationships. Research which examined how persons would react to another being forgiven while being an outside third-party has been difficult to find. The study of ‘third-party forgiveness’ was the objectives of the present research.

Statement of the Problem

This study will examine: 1) acceptance, 2) rejection, and 3) forgiveness of religious targets. Surveys indicate that religion plays a significant part in American life and Americans hold membership in many different religions. Religious people are assigned a variety of personality traits that nonreligious people do not typically receive. Labeling someone as ‘religious’ can have a wide range of implications. By specifying the forms of religion (i.e. Christian and Muslim) the researcher may be able to investigate possible differences among persons of different religions. Rating differences between different religions may indicate religious prejudice exists.

People attribute more negative personality traits to someone when they have been observed behaving in an uncharacteristic way, such as in committing infidelity. However, people may be influenced by observations of the same person being redeemed (i.e. forgiven for infidelity). New to this research area will be the assessment of participant views of religious targets following knowledge of a religious person’s confession of infidelity and forgiveness from his wife and religion. The addition of a forgiveness scenario to the research design will provide for an expanded understanding of the role of subtle beliefs operating in social perceptions of the proclaimed religious.

Gender of participant was also included because men and women assess genders differently on many psychological factors. Typically, a male target man is viewed more positively by both the men and women participants on various characteristics.

Scenario-Type Research: Strengths and Weaknesses

Scenario research attempts to simulate the real world through behavioral observations of a hypothetical target person portrayed in short stories. This type of study has advantages and disadvantages. The use of scenarios allows for experimental manipulation of the independent variables and they are, therefore, legitimate types of experiments. The researcher can purposefully choose the independent variables he/she is interested in investigating and the manipulation information in simple stories. Data collection from scenario-type studies takes much less time than other research methods. For example, in a natural experiment, where the independent variable naturally occurs (i.e. tornados, volcanoes, fires), the collection of data depends on the independent variable actually happening. This method, although very useful, requires months, and sometimes years to collect all the data necessary for analysis. The use of scenarios may require confirming the truthfulness of respondents. By using validity questions and questions regarding the content of the scenario(s), it can be confirmed that participants read and understood the scenarios. Validity questions will be included in the present study. Disadvantages in using a scenario-type study include the drawbacks of all self-report studies. Particularly, there is the problem of participant response bias, such that participants respond in the most socially desirable way.

Research Hypotheses

Three independent variables will be manipulated in this experiment: religious affiliation, Baptist, Muslim, and Nonreligious; an organismic variable, gender of participant; an independent variable relating to the moral behavior of a hypothetical man, actively religious, infidelity, and redemption. Four dependent variables were used to evaluate the target: a rating of the target person's intelligence, honesty, morality, and to what extent participants would like to have the target person as a friend. These ratings will be assessed following the presentation of each level of moral behavior.

Religious Affiliation of Target

It is anticipated that initial ratings on all four dependent variables will be higher for both actively religious target persons (i.e. Muslim and Christian) than for the nonreligious target person. This hypothesis is supported by Bailey and Garrou (1983) and Bailey and Young (1986) who found that religiously affiliated people received more positive ratings than a nonreligious people and by Khallque (1982) who found that people tend to attribute more positive ratings to their own religion than to other religions.

Participant Gender

It is anticipated that male participants will give higher ratings on all four measures: intelligence, honesty, morality, and to what extent they would like to have the male target person as a friend than women participants. This hypothesis is supported by LaFreniere (1996) and Kanekar et al. (1998) who found a gender bias favoring men over women.

Moral Behavior of Target

It is anticipated that ratings on all four dependent variables will be highest following the Religious Affiliation scenario, followed by the Redemption scenario, and lowest following the Infidelity scenario. Hypothesis three is supported by Bailey and Garrou (1983) and Bailey and Young (1986) who found a positive religious stereotype and also by Bailey and Young (1986) who found that a religious person receives more negative evaluations if they behave in an uncharacteristic manner of a religious person.

Interaction: Participant Gender by Religious Affiliation of Target

It is anticipated that male participants will initially have higher ratings than female participants on all four dependent variables for the Christian and Muslim target persons than the Nonreligious target person, but male participants will have higher ratings than female participants the second time for the Nonreligious target person than the Christian and Muslim target persons. Finally, male participants will have higher ratings than female participants the third time for the Christian and Muslim target persons than the Nonreligious target person. This hypothesis is supported by LaFreniere (1996) and Kanekar et al. (1998)

who found a gender bias favoring men over women and is also supported by Bailey and Garrou (1983) and Bailey and Young (1986) who found that religiously affiliated people received more positive ratings than a nonreligious people and by Khallque (1982) who found that people tend to attribute more positive ratings to their own religion than to other religions.

Interaction: Participant Gender by Moral Behavior of Target

It is anticipated that the ratings will be the highest on all four dependent variables following the presentation of the Religious Affiliation scenario, then the Redemption scenario, and will be lowest for the Infidelity scenario for male participants and lower, though in the same direction, for female participants. This hypothesis is supported by LaFreniere (1996) and Kanekar et al. (1998) who found a gender bias favoring men over women and is also supported by Bailey and Garrou (1983) and Bailey and Young (1986) who found a positive religious stereotype and also by Bailey and Young who found that a religious person receives more negative evaluations if he behaves in an uncharacteristic manner of a religious person.

Interaction: Religious Affiliation of Target by Moral Behavior of Target

It is anticipated that: (1) the religious target persons (i.e. Christian and Muslim) will receive the highest ratings following the Religious Affiliation scenario, (2) the religious target person will receive lower ratings than the nonreligious target following the Infidelity scenario, and (3) the religious target persons will receive higher ratings than both the nonreligious target and previous ratings (Infidelity scenario) following the Redemption scenario. This hypothesis is supported by Bailey and Young (1986) who found that religious persons receive more negative evaluations than a nonreligious person if they have behaved in a morally uncharacteristic manner. Finally, it is anticipated that results from the third rating time will be higher for both the Christian and Muslim target than the Nonreligious target person. This is supported by Afifi, Filato, and Weiner (2001), who found that people are willing to forgive personal experiences infidelity depending on discovery method.

Interaction: Participant Gender by Religious Affiliation of Target by Moral Behavior of Target

It is anticipated that: (1) men participants will give higher ratings for the Christian and Muslim target persons than the nonreligious target person than the women target person following the Religious Affiliation scenario, (2) men participants will give higher ratings for the Nonreligious target person than the Christian and Muslim target persons than the women participants following the Infidelity scenario, and (3) men participants will give higher ratings for the Christian and Muslim target persons than the Nonreligious target person than the women participants following the Redemption scenario. This hypothesis is supported by LaFreniere (1996) and Kanekar et al. (1998) who found a gender bias favoring men over women, by Bailey and Garrou (1983) and Bailey and Young (1986) who found that religiously affiliated people received more positive ratings than a nonreligious people and by Khallque (1982) who found that people tend to attribute more positive ratings to their own religion than to other religions, and by Bailey and Garrou and Bailey and Young who found a positive religious stereotype and also by Bailey and Young who found that a religious person receives more negative evaluations if he behaves in an uncharacteristic manner of a religious person.

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Participant Characteristics

Exempt status was granted by the Internal Review Board for the present study. Participants consisted of 189 undergraduates, 18 years and older from the lower- and upper- divisions of a mid-sized southeastern university. Some students received extra credit for their participation. Table 1 provides the cell sizes for the research design.

Table 1

Cell Frequencies

Participant Gender	Target's Religion		
	Christian	Muslim	Nonreligious
Men	22	15	23
Women	44	47	38

N=189

The majority of participants were freshman (46%), followed by seniors (21.2%), then sophomores (18.5%), and finally, juniors (14.3%). The age of participants ranged from 18-67 with a mean of 21.56 years and a standard deviation of 6.08. Over half of the participants were currently dating someone (56.7%) and reported being either Baptist (23.3%), Christian (28.6%), Methodist (6.9%), or Catholic(2.6%), with 28.6% reporting no affiliation. The majority of participants reported they had not had a sexual affair (76.2%) or had not had a partner who had an affair (61.4%). Most participants reported having negative feelings (90.5%) toward sexual affairs in general, no attitude change toward Muslims (54.8%) following 9-11, and having a neutral attitude today toward Muslims (54%).

Measures and Procedures

The booklet contained an instructional page (Appendix F). Participants were tested in their respective course classrooms. Men and women participants initially read three scenarios related to the male

target's life. The first scenario provided a description of a 28-year-old married man's background and religious involvement (Religious Affiliation condition, see appendix A). The second scenario described the man's act of sexual infidelity (Infidelity condition, see appendix B). The third scenario described how the man had confessed his infidelity to his God and received forgiveness as well as seeking and receiving forgiveness from his wife (Redemption condition, see Appendix C).

Dependent variables in the study will consist of four ratings of the target person following each scenario (see Appendix D). The participants will rate to what extent they would like the man as a friend, and how intelligent, honest and moral they perceive him to be. Each rating was made along a 7-point Likert-type scale with two end anchors, extending from the "most unfavorable" perception (1) to the "most favorable" (7).

Finally, a demographics sheet was used which asked the participant's sex, age, class rank, if they consider themselves religiously affiliated, the level of commitment to their own religion, if they have ever cheated themselves or if they had a partner who cheated on them, if their attitude had become more negative or more positive toward Muslims, and what their attitude is today toward Muslims (see Appendix E).

After completion of the experimental booklets, the participants were thanked for their assistance and given the opportunity to ask any questions about the study. After the testing was completed, the participants were given the opportunity to obtain information about the study. Participants could obtain this information by reaching the principle experimenter or co-investigator at the ETSU Psychology Department at (423) 439-6661.

Reliability Study

A two-week test-retest reliability study was conducted on the dependent variable ratings. Students from a social psychology class were asked to read the first observation (Religious) of the Christian target man. They were then asked to rate the subject on the four dependent variables. The students were also asked to place a code, consisting of 4 symbols, at the top of their scales and to remember these codes. In two

weeks, the same class was asked to repeat the procedure. The two tests (first and second) were then paired (using the codes). After entering data, the dependent variables were analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. High to moderately high stability coefficients were observed for the measures of friend, intelligence, and morality. The dependent variable of honesty was observed as having a relatively low correlation ($r = +.33$).

Experimental Design and Data Analysis

The study is a 2 (Gender of Participant) X 3 (Religious Affiliation of Target) X 3 (Moral Behavior) mixed design with repeated measures on the last factor. A doubly-multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to determine evaluation differences in behavior, religion, and gender (SPSS, 2002). Prior to the test, variables were tested and transformed to assure that all assumptions were met. Sample sizes were evaluated and found to equal 189. The smallest cell size was 15 (See Table 2); however, a doubly-multivariate ANOVA may still be used as it is robust to violations of the cell size assumption. Guided by Mertler and Vannatta (2002), variables were transformed to eliminate outliers. Scores less than or equal to 2 were transformed to 3 for the friend variable (friendb1) on the first test time. Scores less than or equal to 3 were transformed to 4 for the honest (honestb1) and intelligent (intelb1) variables on the first test time and for the intelligent (intelb2) variable on the third test time. Scores greater than or equal to 7 were transformed to 6 for the honest (honestb2) variable on the second test time and scores greater than or equal to 6 were transformed to 5 for the moral (moralb2) variable on the second test time. Case 21 continued to be an outlier after data transformations and was therefore eliminated from further analysis. Using Mahalanobis Distance values for assessing multivariate outliers, no outliers were reported.

Data were then analyzed using a Doubly-Multivariate ANOVA (Wilk's Lambda). Post-hoc testing for any significant effects using pairwise comparison F-tests which is appropriate for a doubly-multivariate repeated measures design. All hypotheses were assessed for statistical significance at the $p \leq .05$ level.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Inter-correlations of Dependent Variables

A Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to perform the intercorrelations among the dependent variables. Correlations were found to be low, and therefore more independent between friend and intelligence (.49), friend and morality (.48), intelligence and honesty (.45), and intelligence and morality (.31). A moderately high correlation was found between friend and honesty (.61), and a high correlation was found between honesty and morality (.76).

Doubly-Multivariate ANOVA Results

Using Wilk's Lambda criteria of multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), significance was found for all three main effects and two interaction effects. The main effects of gender $F(4, 180) = 2.81$ and religion $F(8, 360) = 2.60$ were significant at the $p \leq .01$ level. Moral Behavior $F(8, 176) = 107.54$ was also significant but at the $p \leq .001$ level. The two-way interaction of religion by gender [$F(8, 360) = 1.83$] and the three-way interaction of religion by gender by moral behavior [$F(16, 352) = 1.07$] were nonsignificant. The interaction of gender by behavior was significant $F(8, 176) = 2.38$, $p \leq .05$, as well as religion by behavior $F(16, 352) = 2.43$, $p \leq .01$ (see Table 2).

Table 2

Wilk's Lambda Multivariate Tests of Significance

EFFECT	WILK'S F	DF	ES
Gender (BS:2)	2.81**	4/180	0.06
Religion (BS:3)	2.60**	8/360	0.06
Behavior (WS:3)	107.54***	8/176	0.83
Religion (3) X Gender (2)	1.83	8/360	0.04
Gender (2) X Behavior (3)	2.38*	8/176	0.1
Religion (3) X Behavior (3)	2.43**	16/352	0.1
Religion (3) X Gender (2) X Behavior (3)	1.07	16/352	0.05

* $p \leq .05$ ** $p \leq .01$ *** $p \leq .001$

Gender

Following the significant MANOVA, the univariate step-down F was conducted. Significance was not found for friend, intelligence, or honesty. Significance was also not found on the measure of morality ($p \leq .08$) [$F(1,183)=3.289$]. These results may be due to the correlations found among the measures. (For all means and standard deviations, refer to Table 3.)

Table 3

Gender: Means and Standard Deviations

GENDER	N	MEASURES	MEAN(SD)
Men	60	Friend	4.05(.143)
		Intelligence	5.063(.115)
		Honesty	3.972(.106)
		Morality	3.99(.113)
Women	129	Friend	4.283(.096)
		Intelligence	5.078(.077)
		Honesty	3.812(.071)
		Morality	3.743(.076)

Religion

Following the significant MANOVA, the univariate step-down F was conducted. Significance was not found for friend, intelligence, or morality. Significance was also not found for the measure of honesty ($p \leq .06$) [$F(2,183)=2.868$]. These results may be due to the correlations found among the measures. (For all means and standard deviations, refer to Table 4.)

Moral Behavior

Following the significant MANOVA, the univariate step-down F was conducted. Significance was found at the $p < .05$ for friend $F(1,183)= 134.242$, intelligence $F(1,183)= 46.845$, honesty $F(2,366)= 317.90$, and morality $F(2,366)= 360.79$.

Pairwise comparisons between moral behaviors with the Bonferroni correction revealed that all comparisons were significant. Ratings following the religious behavior were significantly higher than those following both the infidelity and redemption behaviors. Ratings were significantly lower following the infidelity behavior than the redemption behavior. (For all means and standard deviations, refer to Table 5.)

Table 4

Religion: Means and Standard Deviations

RELIGION	N	DEPENDENT	
		VARIABLE	MEAN(SD)
Christian	66	Friend	4.189(.142)
		Intelligence	5.042(.114)
		Honest	4.095(.105)
		Moral	4.027(.113)
Muslim	62	Friend	3.929(.161)
		Intelligence	5.050(.130)
		Honest	3.833(.120)
		Moral	3.871(.128)
Nonreligiou	61	Friend	4.382(.143)
		Intelligence	5.119(.116)
		Honest	3.748(.107)
		Moral	3.704(.114)

Table 5

Behavior: Means and Standard Deviations

BEHAVIOR	MEASURE	MEAN(SD)
Religious (1)	Friend	5.132(.85)
	Intelligence	5.471(.070)
	Honest	5.411(.083)
	Moral	5.546(.083)
Infidelity (2)	Friend	3.265(.123)
	Intelligence	4.593(.111)
	Honest	2.040(.089)
	Moral	2.136(.090)
Redemption (3)	Friend	4.104(.113)
	Intelligence	5.146(.074)
	Honest	4.225(.127)
	Moral	3.919(.123)

Gender by Behavior

Following the significant MANOVA, the univariate F was conducted. Significance was found for the measure of honesty $F(2,366) = 4.22, p = .015$. The measure of morality was not significant $F(2,366) = 3.00, (p = .051)$. Post hoc testing on honesty revealed that male ratings were significantly higher on honesty than female ratings following the infidelity behavior ($p = .008$). (For means and standard deviations, refer to Table 6.)

Table 6

Gender X Behavior: Means and Standard Deviations

GENDER	N	BEHAVIOR	MEASURE	MEAN(SD)
Men	60	Religious (1)	Friend	4.830(.141)
			Intelligence	5.328(.116)
			Honest	5.269(.137)
			Moral	5.490(.138)
		Infidelity (2)	Friend	3.221(.204)
			Intelligence	4.638(.185)
			Honest	2.276(.147)
			Moral	2.360(.149)
		Redemption (3)	Friend	4.102(.188)
			Intelligence	5.221(.123)
			Honest	4.371(.210)
			Moral	4.122(.204)
Women	129	Religious (1)	Friend	5.433(.095)
			Intelligence	5.613(.078)
			Honest	5.552(.092)
			Moral	5.601(.093)
		Infidelity (2)	Friend	3.309(.137)
			Intelligence	4.548(.124)
			Honest	1.804(.099)
			Moral	1.911(.100)
		Redemption (3)	Friend	4.107(.127)
			Intelligence	5.072(.083)
			Honest	4.080(.141)
			Moral	3.717(.137)

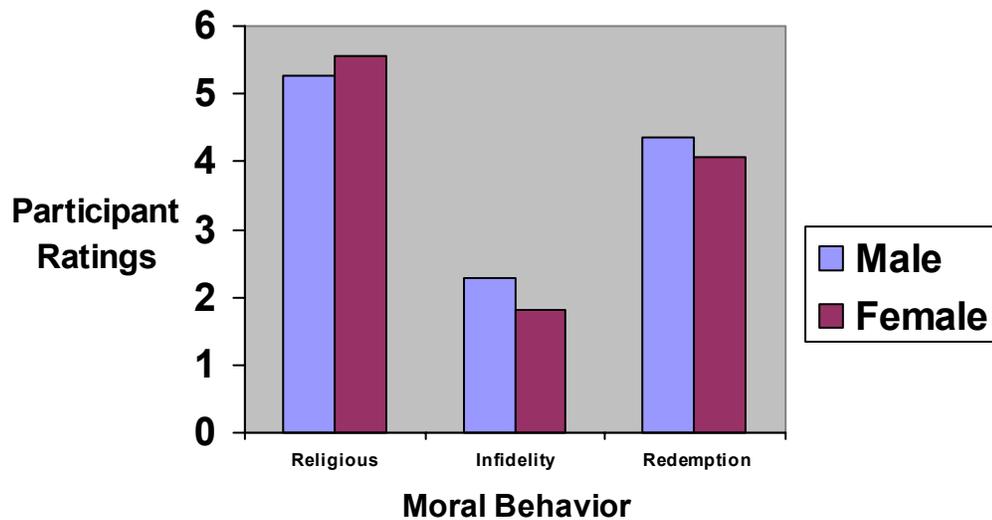


Figure 1
Interaction: Gender by Moral Behavior on Honesty

Religion by Behavior

Following the significant MANOVA, the univariate F was conducted. Significance was not found for friend, intelligence, honesty, or morality. The measure of friend was significant at the $p \leq .08$ level [$F(2,183)= 2.611$]. These results may be due to the correlations found among measures. (For means and standard deviations, refer to Table 7.)

Table 7

Religion X Behavior: Means and Standard Deviations

RELIGION BEHAVIOR		MEASURE	MEAN(SD)
Christian	Religious (1)	Friend	5.091(.140)
		Intelligence	5.273(.116)
		Honest	5.659(.136)
		Moral	5.636(.137)
	Infidelity (2)	Friend	3.398(.203)
		Intelligence	4.727(.184)
		Honest	2.227(.146)
		Moral	2.386(.148)
	Redemption (3)	Friend	4.080(.187)
		Intelligence	5.125(.122)
		Honest	4.398(.209)
		Moral	4.057(.203)
Muslim	Religious (1)	Friend	4.741(.159)
		Intelligence	5.440(.131)
		Honest	5.372(.154)
		Moral	5.626(.155)
	Infidelity (2)	Friend	2.922(.230)
		Intelligence	4.511(.208)
		Honest	1.977(.166)
		Moral	2.040(.168)
	Redemption (3)	Friend	4.125(.212)
		Intelligence	5.197(.139)
		Honest	4.149(.237)
		Moral	3.947(.230)
Nonreligiou	Religious (1)	Friend	5.564(.142)
		Intelligence	5.669(.117)
		Honest	5.201(.138)
		Moral	5.375(.138)
	Infidelity (2)	Friend	3.475(.205)
		Intelligence	4.541(.186)
		Honest	1.915(.148)
		Moral	1.981(.150)
	Redemption (3)	Friend	4.108(.189)
		Intelligence	5.117(.124)
		Honest	4.129(.211)
		Moral	3.755(.205)

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

Seven hypotheses were formulated by the researcher and discussed at the end of Chapter 1. Following is a review of those hypotheses and what the results indicated. First, it was anticipated that initial ratings on all four dependent variables would be higher for both actively religious target persons (i.e. Muslim and Christian) than for the nonreligious target person. This hypothesis was not supported based on the findings of the present research.

Secondly, it was anticipated that male participants would give higher ratings on all four measures: intelligence, honesty, morality, and to what extent they would like to have the male target person as a friend than female participants. This hypothesis was not supported based on the findings of the present research.

Thirdly, it was anticipated that ratings on all four dependent variables would be highest following the Religious Affiliation scenario, followed by the Redemption scenario, and lowest following the Infidelity scenario. This hypothesis was supported based on the findings of the present research.

The fourth hypothesis anticipated that male participants would initially give higher ratings than female participants on all four dependent variables for the Christian and Muslim target persons than the Nonreligious target person, but male participants would give higher ratings than female participants following the infidelity scenario for the Nonreligious target person than the Christian and Muslim target persons. Finally, men participants would have higher ratings than women participants following the forgiveness scenario for the Christian and Muslim target persons than the Nonreligious target person. This hypothesis was not supported based on the findings of the present research.

The fifth hypothesis anticipated that the ratings would be the highest on all four dependent variables following the presentation of the Religious Affiliation scenario, then the Redemption scenario, and would be lowest for the Infidelity scenario for male participants and lower, though in the same direction, for female

participants. This hypothesis was supported only on the measure of honesty following the infidelity behavior based on the findings of the present research.

The sixth hypothesis anticipated that: (1) the religious target persons (i.e. Christian and Muslim) would receive the highest ratings following the Religious Affiliation scenario, (2) the religious target person would receive lower ratings than the nonreligious target following the Infidelity scenario, and (3) the religious target persons would receive higher ratings than both the nonreligious target and previous ratings (Infidelity scenario) following the forgiveness scenario. Finally, it was anticipated that results from the third rating time would be higher for both the Christian and Muslim target than the Nonreligious target person. This hypothesis was not supported based on the findings of the present research.

Lastly, was anticipated that: (1) male participants would give higher ratings for the Christian and Muslim target persons than the nonreligious target person than the female participants following the Religious Affiliation scenario, (2) male participants would give higher ratings for the Nonreligious target person than the Christian and Muslim target persons than the female participants following the Infidelity scenario, and (3) male participants would give higher ratings for the Christian and Muslim target persons than the Nonreligious target person than the female participants following the Redemption scenario. This hypothesis was not supported based on the findings of the present research.

This research project was conducted to learn about three important questions. First, how male and female college students would evaluate a male target person following knowledge about his moral character. Secondly, this research sought to determine if evaluations of a male target would be impacted by his religious affiliation. Thirdly, this research sought to determine if evaluations of a male target would be impacted by an immoral act and fourth, the extent to which participants would be willing to forgive an immoral act if important others forgave him for it.

The religious halo and boomerang effects studied by Bailey and Garrou (1983) and Bailey and Young (1986) served as a guide in predictions regarding these concerns. Out of the four dependent variable

measures of attractiveness as a friend, and level of intelligence, honesty, and morality, all were statistically significant when comparing the religious behavior with the infidelity behavior and the infidelity behavior with the forgiveness behavior. Ratings were highest following the initial description of religious behavior, as expected, based on the religious halo effect. Following the infidelity behavior, evaluations on the dependent variables were most negative, i.e. declined below ratings following the religious affiliation scenario which was expected considering the boomerang effect. Thus, support for the halo effect and the boomerang effect was obtained.

Clearly, the most robust finding in the present research was the powerful effect of moral behavior, i.e. whether the target was described as an upstanding member of the community, an unfaithful husband, or a person seeking forgiveness. Moral behavior in the experiment had a powerful and statistically significant effect on ratings of personal characteristics of the target. The theoretical framework laid out in the introduction of Chapter 1 suggested that these outcomes could have been predicted by using two important concepts: the halo and boomerang effects.

Following forgiveness, evaluations were less positive than those initially obtained and more positive than those obtained following the infidelity behavior. Although some of the halo was recovered, it would seem due to the male target's moral behavior while religious affiliation did not have any effect on this phenomenon. Afifi, Falato, and Weiner (2001) also found that discovery methods of infidelity were good indicators of the occurrence of forgiveness. Participants demonstrated the ability to have "third-party forgiveness" from the observation of the male target's genuine remorsefulness and the forgiveness he receives from his wife and religious leaders.

Male and female participants did not differ on attractiveness as a friend, on intelligence, honesty, or morality except in one instance. The exception was that women evaluated the male target as far less honest following infidelity than men. Brehm, Miller, Perlman, and Campbell's (2002) evolutionary approach may be used to understand this finding. Women tend to be more concerned with a partner's emotional betrayal

than sexual betrayal. Rating the male target as less honest indicates that female participants focused on the target's deception of his wife. The target's violation of the trust and vows within his marriage seemed to be more important to female participants than what he lied about.

The researcher was surprised to find results were not as anticipated with the religious affiliation effect. The manipulation of religious affiliation in this study of a man was to describe him as Christian, Muslim, or nonreligious. This variable did not seem to relate the participant's attractiveness as a friend, or on evaluations of his intelligence, honesty, and morality. Religious affiliation did not yield a statistical effect. These findings were surprising and somewhat disappointing to the investigator in this study as a number of previous empirical studies had demonstrated a very significant role of a person's religious affiliation.

Bailey and associates found a religious halo and boomerang effect, that is, people have a positive bias for those they believe are religiously affiliated. These findings led to the expectation of an effect of religious affiliation; however, the ratings did not differ on whether the male target was Christian, Muslim, or nonreligious. It would seem these results would require future investigation to look more closely at a religious person's moral conduct as well as his church affiliation.

Interpretation of Findings

Following infidelity, all three targets were viewed as least attractive as a friend, less intelligent, honest, and moral compared to ratings following knowledge of the religious affiliation and forgiveness behaviors. This suggests a type of 'behavioral boomerang' effect. The 'behavioral halo' and 'behavioral boomerang' effects reflect the current study's findings that evaluations of others is dependent upon the person's actual moral behavior rather than identification with some organized religion. This is one of the most significant findings of the current research. It indicates that investigators need to be cognizant of participants' private distinctions of the meaning they attach to the ideas of religiosity and morality. In other words, they apparently feel a person can be moral without a formal affiliation with a religious group.

Another interesting finding was the results obtained from the forgiveness scenario. Evaluations were clearly less positive than those obtained following the first scenario (religious behavior) but clearly more positive than following the infidelity behavior. Participants indicated their willingness to forgive a man who had a long-term sexual affair, particularly when he exhibited genuine remorse and actively sought forgiveness. The current study found that evaluations of others may be based less on religious affiliation and influenced more based on the person's behavior.

Women are more affected by the emotional aspects of infidelity than physical aspects (Brehm et al., 2002). By evaluating the man as less honest than male participants suggests that the man's sexual infidelity is not as important as his deception, the secret he kept from his wife. The results of this study indicate a gender difference in what is viewed as more important; sexual or emotional infidelity. Brehm and associates explain this difference as evolutionary in nature. As men innately feel the need to contribute to the survival of their own genes, they are more worried with a partner's sexual infidelity than are women. The threat of another man impregnating his wife is of greatest concern. On the other hand, a woman is worried about her partner's continuing support for both herself and for her children's survival. Consequently, women are far more likely to focus on her partner's emotional infidelity than sexual infidelity. An emotional attachment to another woman threatens the partner and her children's safety and security.

Based on past research investigating the halo and boomerang effects, it was expected that both the Christian and Muslim man would receive more positive evaluations than the nonreligious man: this was not the case in the current study. Results from the current study indicate a need to change perspective on the factors that influence interpersonal attraction from a person's religion to his moral behavior. Past research by Bailey and Young (1986) and Bailey and Garrou (1983) found that, like the physical attractiveness halo effect, people tended to evaluate a religious person more favorably than a nonreligious or antireligious person.

Previous research also demonstrated that a religious person will be evaluated less positively than nonreligious or antireligious person if their behavior is incompatible with religious standards. For this reason, the present investigator chose to vary the religious background of the target. It was also expected that the type of religious background could be a factor in moderating college student evaluations of the male target. Some attention will be given to why no effects occurred.

In the introduction of Chapter 1, a number of pages were devoted to discussing the role that prejudice and stereotyping might play in personal evaluations of others. However, participant ratings were not impacted by religious prejudice or stereotyping.

Many times, “people use shortcuts to gain more information about a person than what is given” and this theory describes certain social ideas about what kinds of personality traits go together (Aronson, Wilson & Akert, 2004, p.107). Implicit personality theory seems to have application to the findings in this study. Earlier studies suggest that knowledge of a person’s religious affiliation automatically means that they are moral, that is, “who is religious is good”. Support was not found for this in the current study; however, it seems a “who is moral is good” phenomena did occur.

Theories of attribution may provide insight on the results found in the current study. The Actor-Observer effect may have occurred since the scenarios used in the current study did not mention possible situational causes of the target man’s behavior. Therefore, participants likely attributed the target’s behavior as caused by dispositional, or personality traits. Obtaining the least positive evaluations following the infidelity behavior can be explained with correspondent inference theory, if the infidelity was viewed by participants as socially undesirable.

A comment on the characteristics of the participants is in order here. Sixty-one percent of participants in this study indicated that they considered themselves to be associated with some form of Protestantism. Although there were a disproportionate number of Protestant participants, there was no clear indication that they evaluated the Christian target more favorably than the Muslim. This is inconsistent with findings by

Khallque (1982) who found participants tended to give more positive evaluations of someone identified as belonging to their own religion. Social psychological research has long demonstrated the powerful role of ingroup identification and outgroup rejection.

Critique and Suggestions

All research requires not only presentation and interpretation of findings but also recognition of methodological concerns that prevailed in the study. Here we will discuss some of these concerns.

It is important to recognize that the investigator of this study chose to study three levels of moral behavior and the levels were required to be organized chronologically. By necessity, this produces a sequence effect that cannot be adequately solved. The 2nd ratings were influenced by both the Religious Affiliation scenario (Appendix A) and the Infidelity scenario (Appendix B). The 3rd ratings obtained were influenced by all three scenarios. Sexual infidelity was expected to produce negative evaluations, which was the case in the current study. Results from the current study may be affected by behaviors other than infidelity. With the use of a married target man with a family, other behaviors could have included: abuse of his own children, murder of his wife or children, infidelity involving another man, or possibly having another family in a nearby city. Such behaviors may prove to be similar or different in their effects on participant evaluations.

The investigator of the present study chose to include three independent variables and four dependent variables. These decisions were affected by the subject matter being investigated and by trying to maintain a manageable factorial design. Had a female target person been added, the design would have grown from a 3- to 4-factor design. Such a design would have increased the number of interactions, lending to a more complex analysis and interpretation of results. But as an initial exploratory study, the researcher thought it was prudent to study a manageable number of variables.

Participants were undergraduate students at a mid-sized southeastern university. This particular population may be more sensitive to social desirability than other populations, possibly being more liberal than the larger general population. Social desirability refers to the tendency of participants to answer questions in the most socially desirable way; this may occur more frequently in a college setting than elsewhere where subtle pressures exist to not display an overt rejection of other groups based solely on their religion. It would be advantageous to use a social desirability scale, like the Marlowe-Crowe Scale, in future studies to understand the degree of such an effect on the study. Following collection of data, news reports were broadcast of the U.S. Military's involvement in Iraq portrayal of a U.S. civilian beheaded by Iraqi soldiers. This was immediately followed by revelations of American military subjecting Iraqi prisoners to inhumane treatment. For example, had the investigator collected participant evaluations immediately following the events mentioned above, it would have been expected that evidence of religious prejudice and stereotyping for the Muslim target man would be found. It would be advantageous to examine ratings for different religious affiliations, including those so prominent in current events, prior to and following graphic images of their behaviors. Using a research strategy like the one suggested above would examine similar theories and past research as the current study aimed to accomplish, but with pictures to help control variations in participant concepts of the religions.

Finding a difference between men and women participants on the measure of honesty may be related to how men and women interpret an act of infidelity. This discrepancy could also be influenced by the use of a male target in the study rather than a female or both genders simultaneously.

Due to findings of gender differences between men and women discussed earlier, it is not so surprising that women rated the target man much less honest than men participants did. If women are more concerned about the emotional infidelity of their spouse, as Brehm and associates (2001) suggest, the results of the current study would reflect a more negative rating from women participants on a personality trait like honesty.

The current study was conducted at a mid-sized southeastern University located in America's Bible belt. College students may be more likely to hold fewer biases, or may feel pressure to answer such questions in the most socially desirable way. It would be interesting to compare ratings obtained in various regions of the U.S. There are possibly concentrations of religions located in other areas within the U.S. that would be necessary to include in a more comprehensive study.

After turning in his booklet, a person who identified himself as a Muslim provided an unsolicited comment. He said that certain sects of the Muslim religion believe there is nothing morally wrong with a man having multiple wives. The actual Muslim sect to which the target man belonged to was not specified in the scenarios; it may be possible that participants viewed the Muslim man's infidelity as acceptable due to being labeled in such a general manner. The Christian religion is also a label that covers a broad range of particular beliefs. For example, infidelity may be viewed differently by participants depending on if the target is a conservative Christian or liberal Christian. Such variations within and across religions may require more specific labeling of religious affiliation to more clearly investigate the acceptance of moral behaviors. This thesis research could open a number of doors to future investigations. More clarification will be needed in the future to clarify a person's religious or actual moral behavior.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Religious Affiliation scenario

John is a 28-year-old man who operates a successful business and provides well for his wife of 5 years and their two young daughters. John is a very socially conscious person and he contributes his time and money to a couple of charitable causes. He is also a very religious [Christian or Muslim] man and he spends at least some of his time each week attending religious services and reading religious materials. His wife takes care of household duties, while John devotes considerable time to his work and social activities. She feels he works too hard, but she is basically happy with her life and marriage.

Appendix B: Infidelity scenario

This story includes what you have already read along with additional information.

John is a 28-year-old man who operates a successful business and provides well for his wife of 5 years and their two young daughters. John is a very socially conscious person and he contributes his time and money to a couple of charitable causes. He is also a very religious [Christian or Muslim] man and he spends at least some of his time each week attending religious services and reading religious materials. His wife takes care of household duties, while John devotes considerable time to his work and social activities. She feels he works too hard, but she is basically happy with her life and marriage.

John has been a faithful husband to his wife during their marriage, but recently he began a secret affair with a newly hired secretary at his business. The affair has been going on for over two months and he has arranged to meet his mistress during evening hours. This means that in addition to his business and social obligations, John comes home later and later in the evenings more often. His wife misses her husband, but she has no suspicion about John's affair. In fact, she completely trusts her husband's fidelity.

Appendix C: Redemption scenario

This story includes what you have already read along with additional information.

John is a 28-year-old man who operates a successful business and provides well for his wife of 5 years and their two young daughters. John is a very socially conscious person and he contributes his time and money to a couple of charitable causes. He is also a very religious [Christian or Muslim] man and he spends at least some of his time each week attending religious services and reading religious materials. His wife takes care of household duties, while John devotes considerable time to his work and social activities. She feels he works too hard, but she is basically happy with her life and marriage.

John has been a faithful husband to his wife during their marriage, but recently he began a secret affair with a newly hired secretary at his business. The affair has been going on for over two months and he has arranged to meet his mistress during evening hours. This means that in addition to his business and social obligations, John comes home later and later in the evenings more often. His wife misses her husband, but she has no suspicion about John's affair. In fact, she completely trusts her husband's fidelity.

Recently, John came to feel severely guilty about what he was doing to his wife, family, and himself and he decided to end the illicit affair, which he did. He initially sought out a [Christian or Muslim] religious leader where he confessed his wrongdoings. He asked for God to forgive him and he left feeling cleansed of his sins. He then went to his wife and confessed his adultery and he asked his wife for forgiveness. He promised to remain true to their marriage vows for the rest of their lives. His wife, who was also very religious, agreed to forgive him.

Appendix D: Dependent Variables

Based on the information provided to you about this man, please complete this form.

1) To what extent do you think you would like John as a friend?

(I wouldn't like him)							(I would like him)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

2) How intelligent do you think John is?

(Not very intelligent)						(Very intelligent)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3) How honest do you think John is?

(Not very honest)						(Very honest)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4) How moral a person do you think John is?

(Not very moral)						(Very moral)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix E: Demographics Sheet

1) What was the name of the man you have read about?

- a. John b. Sam c. Charles d. Keith

2) What religion was the man you have just read about?

- a. Muslim b. Christian c. Don't know d. Catholic

3) What did the man you have just read about do for a living?

- a. Businessman b. Teacher c. Truck Driver d. Artist

4) What does his wife do?

- a. Teacher b. Housewife c. Writer d. Midwife

5) How long have these two people been married?

- a. 1 year b. 6 years c. 5 years d. 10 years

6) Male _____ Female _____

7) Age _____

8) Are you presently _____ dating someone

_____ married

_____ uninvolved with a romantic partner

9) Class Rank:

_____ Freshman _____ Sophomore _____ Junior _____ Senior _____ Graduate

10) Are you personally affiliated with a religious denomination?

Yes _____ No _____

If so, please identify it.

11) How religiously committed do you consider yourself to be?

(Not very religiously
committed)

1 2 3 4 5 6

(Very religiously
committed)

7

12) Have you ever had a sexual affair?

Yes _____ No _____

13) Have you ever had a romantic partner who had a sexual affair?

Yes _____ No _____

14) How do you feel about sexual affairs?

(I believe there is
nothing wrong with
affairs)

1 2 3 4 5 6

(I believe affairs
are completely
wrong)

7

15) How much has your attitude toward Muslims changed because of 9-11?

(Become More
Negative)

1 2 3 4 5 6

(Become Less
Negative)

7

16) What is your attitude today toward Muslims?

(Very Negative)

1 2 3 4 5 6

(Very Positive)

7

Thank you for taking the time to take part in this study. The investigator wants to let you know that this study is looking at various religions although you may have gotten only one.

Appendix F: Instructional Page

Instructions

Students under the age of 18 are not eligible to participate in this study.

On the following pages, you will be asked to read three short stories regarding a hypothetical 28-year-old married man. After reading each story, a short questionnaire is given. After you complete the questionnaires, you will be asked to answer a few short questions about yourself.

Once you have completed all aspects of the booklet, please return it to the investigator.

Remember that your answers are completely confidential and in no way will your name ever be associated with the answers you have provided. This activity is completely voluntary and you may leave at any time without penalty.

If you should have any questions about the study, contact the principal investigator, Meridith Williamson (1-423-878-4444), Co-Investigator, Dr. Roger C. Bailey (1-423-439-6661) or the psychology department secretary, Jan Brown (1-423-439-4424).

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

VITA

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